



ISO/TC 224/WG 2

Service to users

Convenor

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WORKING DRAFT – WG2 SERVICE TO USERS

Notes by the WG Convenor:

- This is a preliminary version of the working draft by WG2. Originally developed by an open drafting group within the WG and compiled for the Ottawa meeting, the document was later partially revised and completed in Ottawa from all WG experts present at that meeting.
- This document should be considered **strictly** as a work in progress. Several of its sections have **not been yet revised** by working group experts and consequently cannot be considered as a final proposal from the working group. The experts and convenor of WG2 expect to develop all sections of the document before officially presenting the draft to the technical committee.
- This document will be circulated to all TC members. Additionally, the WG2 convenor is aware that unofficial versions of this document have even been circulated to national committees. Those who read this document and have not participated in its development should bear in mind that although it reflects to a great extent the work developed within WG2, experts have not agreed to a final proposal yet (mainly due to time constraints). Consequently, this document should only be considered as a tool for understanding the work of WG2, but not as a proposal by WG2.
- For the same reason, WG2 convenor expects as many contributions and comments as possible to develop the final draft, as long as they are produced by experts appointed to the working group

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1 Scope

2 Normative references

3 Terms and definitions

4 Components of the service

4.1 General

The service to users comprises a series of processes that include the provision of the service as such, the billing and contract management for that service and the interaction with the users. Most of the components of the service with regards to users are common to water supply and wastewater services unless stated otherwise.

4.2 Provision of the service

4.2.1 Application for connection

Procedures for connecting user facilities to water supply / wastewater service facilities.

4.2.2 Water supply / Waste discharge

Procedures for supplying water or discharging wastewater and/or stormwater.

4.2.3 Crisis management

Organisation of users' information and measures to maintain service and to prevent damages on assets in case of major incidents or natural catastrophes

4.3 Contract management and billing

4.3.1 Service agreement

Establishment of a contractual agreement between the user and the service provider.

4.3.2 Billing

Conditions relating to billing for service, terms of payment and information on applicable rates.

4.4 Interaction with users

4.4.1 Identification and general information

Information on all characteristics of the service delivered to the user e. g.:

- name of the service;

- administrator identification;
- address of offices;
- opening hours;
- telephone or telematic contact during opening hours, outside opening hours or in case of emergency.
- Availability of the service
- Responsibilities of the user
- Rights of the user
- Rate structure and rate setting procedures

4.4.2 Contact with users

Involves all aspects of contact between the user and the service providers:

- mail;
- electronic communications;
- telephone calls;
- user visits to the offices;
- house calls by a service representative;
- site visits by a service representative

4.4.3 Request processing

Written or verbal response to the user and any resulting actions necessary to address the user's request or complaint be it explicit or implicit.

5 Users' needs and expectations

5.1 General

The quality of the service provided to the users depends on their needs and expectations and the ability of the service provider to meet them. All elements of need and expectation listed, relate to both water supply and wastewater services unless stated otherwise.

5.1.1 Access to water and sanitation

The user expects that governments will take all practical steps to ensure that all people have access to drinking water and wastewater services.

5.2 Quality of the service

5.2.1 Time to establish new connections

The user expects to be connected to the service in a reasonable and specified amount of time. An explanation may be required on the specific conditions under which the connection can be made and when.

5.2.2 Repairs

The user expects that the repairs to be carried out by the service provider are made within a reasonable amount of time. The users expects to be warned in advance of planned repairs that affect their service. The user expects that unplanned repairs that affect their service are finished within a reasonable amount of time. In all cases the inconvenience to the user should be minimized.

5.2.3 Value for money

The user expects to obtain a good value in terms of the service received and the bill paid.

5.2.4 Quantity of supply (Water Supply)

The user expects to receive sufficient quantity of water to satisfy their needs.

5.2.5 Pressure (Water Supply)

The user expects an adequate level of water pressure at all times.

5.2.6 Continuity of supply (Water Supply)

The user expects a water supply on a continuous basis. In the event that continuous supply is not possible, the user expects an equitable supply.

5.2.7 Coverage and availability of water (Water Supply)

The user expects that water supply is provided within the service area under the responsibility of the service provider, and that water is made available where fixed network coverage is not available.

5.2.8 Waste discharge (Wastewater)

The user expects to be able to discharge sewage at any time and without delay directly into the wastewater system. The user also expects to be protected from nuisances such as:

- Backflow or sewage overflow caused by a blocked drain or obstruction in the wastewater system;
- Wastewater system flooding, offensive odours, rodents or insects from the wastewater system.

5.2.9 Floods (Wastewater)

The user expects that no wastewater system floods affect a property. In the case of a flooding event, the user expects that its duration and effects will be minimized.

5.2.10 Coverage and availability of wastewater services (Wastewater)

The user expects that wastewater service is provided within the service area of responsibility of the service provider, and that other forms of sanitation are made available where fixed network coverage is not available.

5.3 Service agreement and billing

5.3.1 Availability of a clear agreement

The user expects a service agreement with clear, fair and documented conditions. The user expects to be informed of any change to the agreement or its conditions, in a reasonable amount of time. Additionally, the user expects flexible procedures for cancelling or changing the agreement.

5.3.2 Fairness of billing

The user expects to be fairly billed for the service provided.

5.3.3 Response to billing complaints

The user expects a response to a billing complaint from the service provider that clearly resolves the problem in a reasonable amount of time, with fair consideration of any monetary issues caused by billing errors.

5.3.4 Clarity of billing

The user expects clear, accurate and detailed information on the structure and content of bills, available while the service agreement is in force.

5.3.5 Methods of payment

The user expects periodic billing and flexible methods of payment.

5.4 Interaction with users

5.4.1 General

The user expects:

- any enquiry addressed to the service provider by any means to be responded to and resolved within a reasonable amount of time;
- guaranteed confidentiality;
- updated available information;
- competent and respectful staff.

5.4.2 Telephone enquiries

The user expects telephone calls to be responded to in a reasonable amount of time, either directly or by being transferred to the appropriate service department.

5.4.3 Visits to service provider offices

The user expects to be welcomed and assisted effectively and directed to the appropriate person. The user also expects:

- convenient opening hours that are respected;

- reasonable, well-managed waiting times;
- suitable public reception area;

5.4.4 Visits to the user

The user expects that any employee from the service provider respects the appointment time, shows proper identification and minimizes the inconvenience to the user.

5.4.5 Written complaints and requests

The user expects that any written complaints or requests (including those by electronic media, such as e-mails and faxes) are carefully considered. The user expects a clear, accurate, personalised response in a reasonable amount of time.

5.4.6 Notification on restrictions and interruptions

The user expects to be notified of any restrictions or interruptions of the service.

5.4.7 Availability of service information

The user expects that all information regarding public aspects of the service, including the designation of responsibilities, is issued by the service provider in an open and transparent manner.

5.4.8 Community outreach

The user expects the service provider to provide information regarding the system through community outreach efforts.

5.4.9 Participation of the users

The user expects that participation is encouraged and enabled by a transparent participatory process and the right to put forward the users' interest in such matters as prices, standards and network development.

Mechanisms could include

- Monitoring the tendering processes
- Availability of documentation pertaining conditions of service
- Rate hearings

5.5 Environmental concerns

5.5.1 Use of resources

The user expects that the service provider makes a sustainable use of the water resources, as well as other natural resources.

5.5.2 Wastewater treatment (Wastewater)

The user expects efficient and effective treatment of wastewater before it is returned to the environment.

5.5.3 Environmental impact

The user expects that the environmental impacts resulting from the service provided are minimized and kept within reasonable and legal limits at all times.

5.6 Safety and emergency management

In the event of an emergency affecting the service or the safety of the users, the user expects information on the following:

- nature of the incident;
- risks involved;
- contact details;
- what to do;
- time before normal service is resumed;
- temporary solutions available.

5.7 Quality of water (Water Supply)

5.7.1 Aesthetic and sensory quality of water

The user expects to be supplied with unobjectionable water with regards to taste, colour and odour.

5.7.2 Public health quality of water

The user expects to be supplied with quality water that poses no threat to public health.

5.7.3 Compliance with regulations and guidelines

The user expects to be supplied with water that complies with applicable regulations and/or guidelines.

6 Criteria and guidelines for service assessment and improvement

6.1 General

The service to the users can be assessed and improved in accordance to the users' expectations. The fulfilment of these expectations can often be measured by means of performance indicators although in some occasions no valid measure can be applied and only improvement guidelines can be given. Performance indicators and guidelines are linked to the users' expectations defined in section 5.

6.2 Quality of the service

6.2.1 Time to establish new connections

Performance Indicator: Number of regular connections within the specified time/total number of regular connections (%)

Comment: A customer service charter should exist specifying a maximum connection time (in days) for regular connections, and the comment that in some countries compensation is offered when the deadline is not met. Special connections should be addressed individually.

6.2.2 Repairs

Guidance: For planned repairs the service provider should inform the user in advance with an estimate of the time and duration of the interruption of the service. For unplanned repairs that affect the service, the service provider should inform the user about the estimated time until normal service is restored. In all repairs the service provider should minimize the inconveniences to the user.

6.2.3 Value for money

Guidance: Users should be questioned about what they are actually paying for the service and then questioned “are you getting value for money”

Comment: In some cases the perception “value for money“ changes when the user learns about how much he / she is actually paying for the service.

6.2.4 Quantity of supply (Water Supply)

Guidance:

6.2.5 Pressure (Water Supply)

Performance indicator: Number of properties within the acceptable range of pressures at the service connection / total number of serviced properties.

Comment: The range of acceptable pressures changes depending on the particular conditions of each utility.

6.2.6 Continuity of water supply (Water Supply)

Performance Indicator: (Number of hours when the system is pressurised during the year / (365 x 24)) x 100

Comment: When there are subsystems supplied in different periods of time, the indicator has to be assessed individually for each subsystem and the result is a weighted average using the number of service connections of each subsystem as weighting factor. In leap years, 365 should be replaced by 366.

Guidance: For non network systems, regular service should be provided at reasonable intervals known by the user.

6.2.7 Coverage and availability of water (Water Supply)

Performance indicator: Number of properties with access to the water supply service / total number of properties under the responsibility of the service provider

Comment: If accurate data is available the number of properties can be replaced by the resident population with access to the service. When evaluating this indicator, significant changes in the number of properties or the resident population should be taken into account.

6.2.8 Floods (Wastewater)

Performance indicator: (Number of properties subject to floods * duration of the floods) / (total number of properties * 365 * 24)

6.2.9 Coverage and availability of wastewater services (Wastewater)

Performance indicator: Number of properties with access to the wastewater service / total number of properties under the responsibility of the service provider

Comment: If accurate data is available the number of properties can be replaced by the resident population with access to the service. When evaluating this indicator, significant changes in the number of properties or the resident population should be taken into account.

6.3 Contract management and invoicing

6.3.1 Availability of a clear contract / agreement

Guidance: **To be written.** Example: The service agreement should have clear, fair and documented conditions and comply with related laws and ordinances in each country. Any changes in the agreement should be notified to the user and the cancellation procedures should be flexible.

6.3.2 Fairness of metering and invoicing

PI:

$$\text{Billing Accuracy} = \frac{\text{Number of billing generated during reporting period} - \text{Number of driven billing adjustments during reporting period}}{\text{Number of bills generated during the reporting period}} \times 10,000$$

Guidance: The fairness of metering can be assessed estimating the average precision of meters from statistical samples. The user should be informed that in most cases, the water meter's inherent error always tends to undermeasure consumption.

In the case of specific complaints about the accuracy of a meter, the service provider should perform a meter test in the presence of the user, and replace it when appropriate.

6.3.3 Response to invoicing complaints

PI: Total time of response for billing complaints / number of billing complaints

PI: Number of billing complaints during a year / number of registered users *100

PI: Number of billing complaints answered within the specified time / Total number of billing complaints

Guidance: The specified time of response depends on the conditions of every service provider.

6.3.4 Clarity in the bill

Guidance: Bill contents should be as clear and understandable for each registered customer as possible. Undertakings may prepare documents that will enable a better explanation of the terms of the bill to the user (rates list, especial cases, etc.)

6.4 Interaction with users

6.4.1 Customer enquiry response time

PI: Number of telephone enquiries solved within the specified period / total number of telephone enquiries

Comment: Service providers should not only answer quickly to telephone enquiries, but also provide final solutions or answers to users in limited period of time. The targeted period of time will depend on each service provider.

In telephone calls the expectation is that:

- The call be answered quickly;

A quick reply be given, either directly or by transfer to the relevant service.

6.4.2 Visits to service provider offices

PI: A PI was proposed in Paris... however no PI has appeared later. Waiting time?

Guidance: Service providers must take efforts in their offices to:

- Establish convenient opening hours that are respected;
- Provide the means to have reasonable, well-managed waiting times;
- Prepare a suitable public reception area;
- Provide the customer with easy understandable documents;
- Simplify as much as possible the procedures for applications;
- Disclose water related information actively

6.4.3 Visits to the customer

Guidance: The idea in Paris was to stress on the procedures for visits to customer (user?) and the interaction between the service provider and the user in these situations. Proposals?

- Identification
- Polite behaviour
- Appointment time
- Etc.

6.4.4 Written complaints and requests

PI: (Number of written complaints answered within the target time) / Number of written complaints during the year) * 100.

6.4.5 Notification on restrictions / interruptions

PI:

$$\frac{\Sigma(\text{Population subject to a water interruption} \times \text{duration of the interruption in hours})}{\text{population served} \times 24 \times 365} \times 100$$

6.4.6 Transparency in the general service information

Guidance: General information including service information should be available for the users with transparency and openness. The decision about the specific kind of media which should be used has to be made in regard of the local availability and distribution opportunities.

Comment: Users may request the service provider to disclose information. There are some cases that information disclosure is controlled by law. However, when possible, service providers should disclose information actively when requested to do so.

6.4.7 Community outreach

Guideline: Water utilities should participate in local community activities, whenever these are in touch with the service items. This participation can lead to a good relationship with local community by providing information actively. This detail becomes crucial especially when it is essential to get good cooperation of community and volunteer activity in the case of emergency.

PI: A PI was proposed in Paris... however no PI has appeared later. Existence of a scheme / mechanisms to develop community outreach?.

6.5 Environmental concerns

6.5.1 Efficiency in the use of resources

Guidance: A service provider should strive for the efficiency in the use of water and other resources (i.e. energy). In some cases economic drivers will lead to an efficient use of some or all of these resources.

6.5.2 Treatment efficiency

PI: According to proposals is not within the Scope of WG2. Compliance with local regulations?

6.5.3 Mitigation measures

Guidance: Drinking-water supply undertakings should positively minimize the environmental impact. The results of implementation should be reported to the customers and it must be evaluated by third-party companies. These are regulated in ISO14000s and among in countries laws. These mitigation measures are subject to lead to high cost, which is contradictory to customer service, so that drinking-water supply undertakings should get customer's better understanding about it.

Specifically those related to:

- Water catchment
- Water treatment
- Water storage
- Water distribution
-
- Floods (wastewater)
- Production and other activities

Others (gas produced, CO₂, noise, CSO, etc)

6.5.4 Customer enquiry response time

PI: Number of telephone enquiries solved within the specified period / total number of telephone enquiries

Comment: Service providers should not only answer quickly to telephone enquiries, but also provide final solutions or answers to users in limited period of time. The targeted period of time will depend on each service provider.

6.6 Safety and emergency measures

6.6.1 Safety and emergency procedures

PI: Existence of specific emergency/safety procedures for the service provision (yes/no)

Guidance: Safety measures must be taken for maintaining service under any circumstances, for incidents with regard to natural catastrophes and damages on assets. To prevent, for example, a lack of finance and all kind of other significant management failures a suitable controlling system should also be implemented.

Water companies should make an effort to provide the consumer with information regarding an emergency situation. Pamphlets, homepages, monitors and posters are most effective media to let consumer know the information of emergency situation.

Additionally, an emergency measures manual should describe what to do in case of emergency and staff training must be conducted according to the manual of emergency measures. It is needed that users and public utilities staff sometimes attend the training.

The time and the method of recovery in case of emergency depend on each emergency situation. In order to prevent misinformation, water companies should let the customer know the difference between the effects of (for example) flooding and a small pipe which has collapsed.

6.7 Quality of the product (Water Supply)

6.7.1 User perception of the quality (check name)

PI: Number of complaints related to water quality issues / total number of complaints (%)

PI: Number of complaints related to water quality issues / number of registered users * 100

Guidance: Complaints are not the only measure for perception of quality. It is recommended to carry out surveys.

Comment: Total number of complaints is not necessarily an indicator of poorer service, but it may be correlated to possibility of complaints. Complaints should address quality issues of the product regarding the service, and not others (i.e. temperature).

6.7.2 Real quality of the water

PI: Total number of treated water tests complying with the applicable standards or legislation in a year / total number of tests of treated water carried out during the year x 100

6.7.3 Compliance with regulations and guidelines

PI: Compliance with applicable regulations / guidelines (yes/no)

Comment: Along with the indicator value it should be clearly specified which regulations and / or guidelines are being complied with.

6.8 Other concerns

6.8.1 Right to water

6.8.2 Right to sanitation

6.8.3 Participation of the consumers / users